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22 APR 1960

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training

SUBJECT : Survey of Foreign Language Requirements of the Support Services

1. Purpose

Pursuant to your request we have conducted a survey of the current foreign language requirements of the Support Services. The results of this survey are presented in the attached tabulation.

2. Definition

As a starting point for this survey, it was necessary to define the term "essential language requirements." For this purpose, I believe the following definition is reasonable and clear:

An essential language requirement for a Support Officer is language ability necessary to (a) accomplish, with reasonable efficiency and within permissible time limits, the full scope of duties generally regarded as falling within the Support area and expected of Support Officers, (b) without calling on staff employee operating personnel for translation and interpreter service, and (c) without significant compromise of reasonable security standards.

Necessarily, there are two other elements which must be considered in developing a survey of language requirements, although they do not fall within the above definition. These are: (a) the need to maintain the language standards of this Agency in relation to those of other U.S. Government agencies with representation abroad, working in the general field of foreign activities; (b) the need to maintain at a satisfactory level the participation of Support personnel in the station team concept so that these personnel are well integrated into the station structure. These considerations are, in my opinion, just as valid as the more obvious demands of the day-to-day activities of Support Officers moving throughout the economies of the various countries where they serve. There is a growing expectation, by our operating personnel colleagues, by those organizations that provide us cover and support, and somewhat less so by official foreign contacts with whom we deal, that Support Officers should be reasonably well prepared to discharge their foreign language responsibilities. Unavoidably this expectation is greater in regard to the European languages (or the "world" languages in our Group I classification) than for the more exotic languages, and this is reflected in the present survey.

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3. Scope

The survey covers all those positions abroad which are filled by personnel of all of the Support Career Services except for the Communications Career Service. I have asked the Director of Communications to conduct a survey for his office similar to the present one. You will also note that it does not include clerical personnel who do not carry Support designations.

4. Increasing Emphasis on Languages

As we all know, over the past few years the Congress has become increasingly conscious of the need for raising the standards of language competence for U.S. Government personnel serving abroad and recently has indicated its determination to accomplish more in this direction. Moreover, we know that the USIB has studied this problem and made recommendations to the President and the constituent agencies aimed at raising language standards. It is clear that these standards will become more rigorous with the passing years. We have given notice of this already in the higher degree of competence being insisted upon for monetary awards in the impending revision of our Language Development Program. I, therefore, view the present study only as a starting point, and I expect that we shall become steadily more demanding in our standards as we progress.

5. Study of World Languages

It was not surprising to find a valuable and tangible by-product being gained by the Agency in the accumulation of competence in more than one of the world languages by individual Support personnel. This is a "third country" or auxiliary language effect whereby Support personnel who cannot take the time required to attain competence in the more difficult Group II and III languages nevertheless find themselves capable of making effective and useful contacts in many areas of the world by use of the European world languages. This fact has been recognized in the present survey with

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maintained and increased by study or actual use, or both, after arrival at the post. This is particularly true of those positions where only an "elementary" level is essential initially. It will be noted that the category of specialized knowledge consists of only two breakdowns, viz., "speaking only" and "speaking and reading." In actual practice, there were only two positions identified which require only a reading knowledge of the language and these are finance officer positions where translation of vouchers presented in a foreign language is necessary. In most cases speaking knowledge is by far the most essential specialty, while reading knowledge is usually a secondary requirement. The survey disclosed no position which requires a writing knowledge of the language so that for the purposes of the Support Services, this phase of language training is of much less importance.

8. Conclusions

a. Comparative language standards of the Support Services are somewhat below those of the operating elements at this time. More is being expected of Support Officers in the way of language competence, and this expectation will increase rather than diminish because of the increasingly higher standards of the Agency as well as of other Government agencies abroad. Therefore, I view the language requirements identified in this survey as the minimum standard which we must now attain to discharge the Support role abroad effectively.

b. To maintain this standard, I will expect the Support Career Services to plan assignments to the indicated positions as far in advance as may be necessary, and I anticipate that we may have to spend money for external training in some instances to bring up competence to the required level.

c. Since they represent a minimum level, I do not intend this survey and the resulting tabulation to restrict language training to the indicated jobs and degrees of competence listed. Within reasonable limits, I shall encourage any of the Support Career Services or operating components having a responsibility for Support positions abroad who wish to maintain a higher standard. The Support Career Services must be alert to recognize new requirements as they emerge.

d. Officers of the Support Career Services who are regarded as available for assignments abroad but who are not awaiting immediate assignment abroad or targeted for a specific assignment at a future date should be tested for language aptitude and, thereafter, encouraged to study at least one of the "world" languages such as French, German, or Spanish until they attain a useable degree of competence, probably at the intermediate level.

SIGNED

L. K. WHITE
Deputy Director
(Support)

Attachment
Tab A

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